

# Virginia Tech

## The Public Health Response



# Public Health Response Teams

- Southwest Regional EP&R Response Team
- Southwest Medical Examiner's Office
- Support from other Medical Examiner's Offices across the state
- PIO support from the EMS and the Eastern Region EP&R Response Team
- Communications Team Richmond



# Public Health Assistance

- Joint Information Center
- Family Center
- Medical Examiner
- Media

# Joint Information Center





# Families

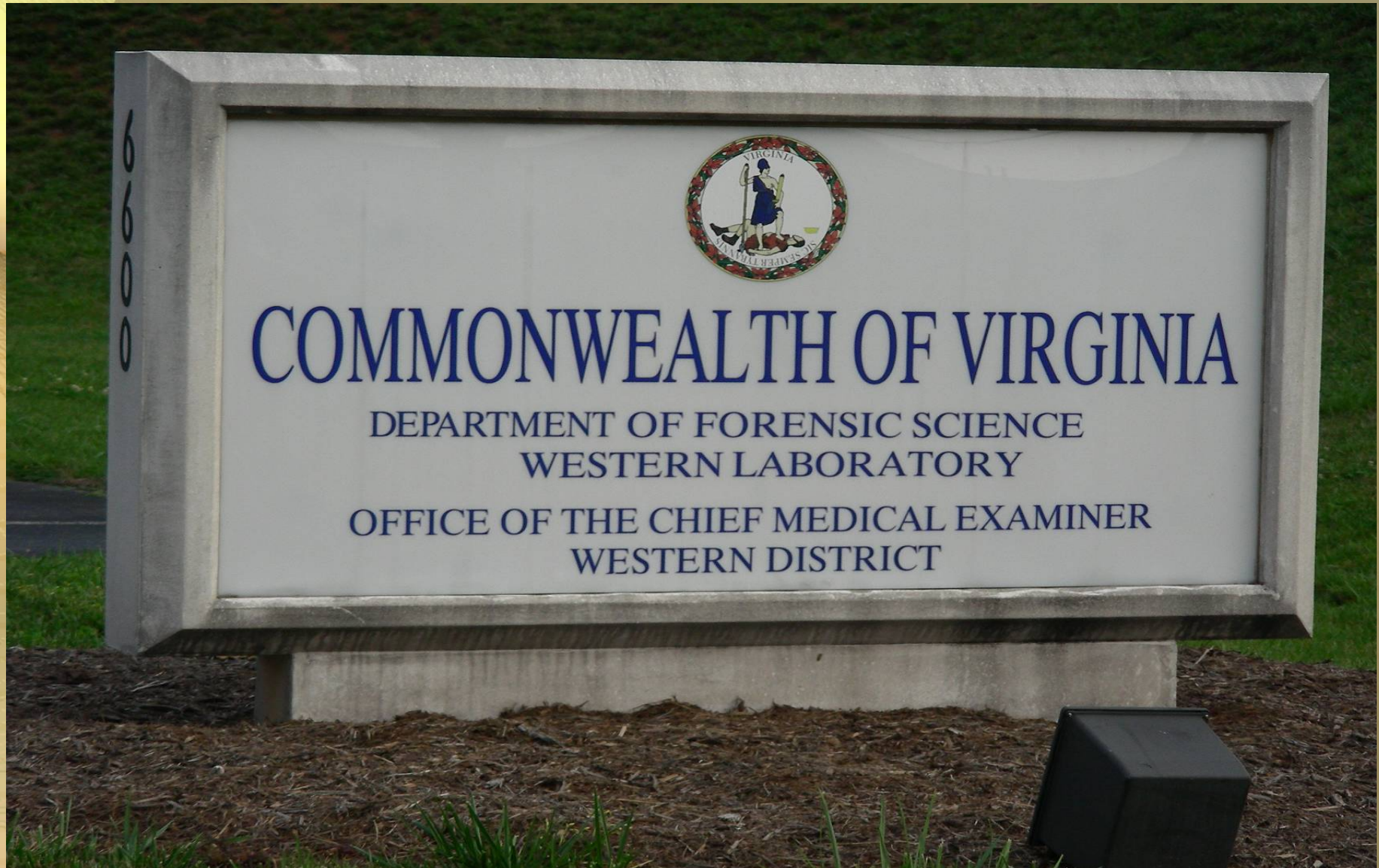


# Family Assistance





# Medical Examiner Assistance











# Medical Examiner Fact Sheet PIO Guide

- 1. Do not get into any specifics in press releases until you can talk to the families first. Then any new information should be given to the families in the scheduled briefings before you talk to the media.
- 2. Do not have press conferences in or near the Family Assistance Center. Keep the press away from the families as much as possible. If the families want to be interviewed, give them a mechanism to go to the press; do not bring the press into or near the Family Assistance Center.
- 3. Think about what you are saying to the families and the impact it will have on them.
- 4. Are you personally impacted by the event? Ask yourself if you are really the best person to represent the OCME. If not, that is acceptable; we will get another PIO who does not have a personal interest and provide you the assistance and information you need to get through the incident.



# Family Wallet Cards

- The unfortunate circumstances of your loved one's death
- may be of interest to the community and the media. During
- this difficult time, it is good to know how best to deal with
- inquiries from the media. There are three options that you
- have...
- **Speaking to the media**
- It is up to you whether or not you want to speak to them.
- There is no right or wrong answer to this issue. If you feel
- like you want to speak to the media it's ok. You can express
- your feelings, concerns or talk about your loved one. The
- media may be looking for answers that only the police know;
- it is best to let the police handle those kinds of questions.
- **Not speaking to the media**
- It is your right to not speak to the media. This is a very difficult
- and emotional time, and the stress of talking to the
- media may be too much for you and your family.
- **Family spokes person**

# Mass Fatality Frequent Questions

- *About Autopsies*

- **1. Where have the bodies been taken?**

- To the regional medical examiner facility or the incident morgue
- which has been established by the medical examiner for this particular
- event. All of the remains are safe and well cared for at the incident
- morgue. Once the medical examiner completes the appropriate examinations,
- all of the victims will be released to the legal next-of-kin.

- **2. Is there going to be an autopsy?**

- In about half of the cases accepted and investigated, the medical
- examiner evaluates the medical history of the decedent, performs
- an external physical examination, obtains body fluids for toxicologic
- testing, and investigates the circumstances of the death with
- law enforcement officials to determine the cause and manner of
- death. The remaining cases require a medicolegal autopsy.

- **3. Why does an autopsy have to be completed?**

- The medical examiner decides if an autopsy must be performed



# Medical Examiner Statements

- Tech Gunman Shot Victims Over 100 Times\_ Apr 22 07:31 PM US/Eastern  
*By KRISTEN GELINEAU*  
*Associated Press Writer*
- *Dr. William Massello, the assistant state medical examiner based in Roanoke, said Sunday that Cho died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to his temple after firing enough shots to wound his 32 victims more than 100 times.*

# Medical Examiner Statements

- Those victims apparently did not fight back against Cho's ambush. Massello said he did not recall any injuries suggesting a struggle. Many victims had defensive wounds, indicating they tried to shield themselves from Cho's gunfire, he said.
- Massello said Cho hit many of his victims several times.



# Hospitals: Carilion Roanoke Memorial





# Hospitals: Carilion New River Valley





# LESSONS LEARNED

- Respond as early as possible
- Know the surroundings or research
- When an event is in progress try to monitor the blogs and websites
- Check on logistics or have someone doing it for you
- Know what it takes to be prepared for Family Assistance

# LESSONS LEARNED

- Wireless Computer very important
- Develop relationships before a crisis
- Have materials prepared if possible before the crisis. If not, be prepared to develop materials as you go.
- Always expect the unexpected
- Be careful of the emotions
- Always be prepared for the politics



# Public Health Response

- Thank You

[larry.hill@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:larry.hill@vdh.virginia.gov)

- (757) 683-9175

